

# What South Carolinians should know about PFAS

**What are PFAS?** PFAS is an acronym for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, a class of chemicals that have been manufactured in the U.S. since the 1950s. PFAS were considered useful compounds because of their effectiveness at repelling grease and water and the ability to extinguish large fuel fires.

**Where are PFAS found?** PFAS are used to manufacture some nonstick cookware, stain and water-resistant carpets, fabrics, and clothing, cosmetics, dental floss, paper and food packaging materials, fire-fighting foams and more. PFAS are often called 'forever chemicals' because they last a long time in the environment. They can be found in surface water, groundwater, soils and air.

**How can PFAS affect me?** Scientific research over the past five years indicates that there *may* be human health and ecological effects due to the widespread use of PFAS in industry. In 2022, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) set new interim drinking water Health Advisories (HA) for two individual PFAS compounds (PFOA and PFOS) and two final HAs for GenX and PFBS.

Drinking water HAs are set at the lowest levels that the most sensitive population can be exposed to without experiencing any negative health effects. The people most sensitive to PFAS exposures are breastfed children. However, according to the EPA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in most cases the benefits from breastfeeding appear to outweigh the risks of PFAS exposure to infants.

HAs are based on long-term exposure. Exposure assumes that an adult person will consume a minimum of 2 liters of the 'impacted' water per day, 365 days per year, for 70 years (for young children the assumption is 1 liter per day).

**What can I do about it?** We have all heard the phrase, "Knowledge is power." See the link below to online resources that can help you make the best decisions for you and your family. Making yourself aware of potential PFAS sources within your own home allows you to reduce your risk of exposure. Some measures you can take include the use of water filters, avoiding some nonstick cookware, certain cleaning products, and water-resistant clothing.

**NOTE:** There is still a lot of uncertainty around the issue of PFAS and public health. Research and information are rapidly evolving so check the [DHEC PFAS webpage](https://dhec.sc.gov/PFAS) frequently for updates.

## PFAS Sources in the Environment

